

THE  
**RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE**

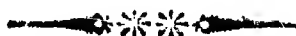
OF

**NORRIS STEARNS,**

WRITTEN

BY

**Divine Command,**



Shewing the marvellous dealings of God to his Son,  
and the miraculous manner in which he was delivered from the Jaws of Death and Hell; and his soul set at liberty,—Likewise his appointment to the Ministry; and Commission from on High, to preach the gospel to every creature.



*Greenfield—Printed for the Author, at the Herald  
Office.*

1815.

## PREFACE.

THE public are here presented with a book written by an illiterate youth, who has been highly favoured of God, and shown many things, which he is now commanded to write. He earnestly solicits the candid attention of every reader, that it may not stand (as the useless Parenthesis) among the other books of the world; for it is written in obedience to the Divine Command, *as a Testimony*, to show his Calling. Care has been taken, that nothing should be written, but by the immediate command of the LORD; whose *Servant* and *Prophet* I am. I give account before God, and know that my Testimony is true: My Father and his Holy Angels bear witness of it; and the work itself shall manifestly declare it. I am not to be accountable for any man's unbelief: By declaring the truth, I free myself from their blood!—St. Paul said he knew a man in CHRIST (so many years ago) such an one, caught up to the third Heaven, and in Paradise heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for man to utter. But in *this generation* they are to be uttered, for the former things are passed away.—I travel through this world, as unknown, yet, well known as poor, yet making many rich as in want, yet possessing all things. And though my feet traverse this earthly ball, yet my soul is walking the golden streets of the Heavenly Jerusalem. At present,

No foot of land do I possess,  
No cottage in the wilderness,  
A poor way-faring man;  
I dwell awhile in tents below,  
Or gladly wander to and fro,  
*Till JESUS calls me home.*

NORRIS.

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*Written by Divine Command, as a Testimony, to show  
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AGREEABLE to account from my parents, my birth (into this world) took place Jan. 12th, A. D. 1789. The place of my nativity is Leyden, Massachusetts, North America.

My parents were formerly from Connecticut, and descendants of English ancestors. They moved to Leyden, when the country was new. There my Father purchased a farm, in the state of nature, where he began to level the sturdy oaks, and by his fostering hand, part of this wilderness soon became a fertile field, and in a few years, plenty smiled around his habitation.

I have three Brothers, and six Sisters, all unconverted to God; wading through sermons, and exhortations, and apparently pressing their way down to the regions of Despair. May the Lord have mercy on

them, and awake them ere they awake in Hell !!—

My Father was once a praying man, and belonged to the Baptist Church in Leyden ; but not having faith in ceremonial ordinances, and dead forms of religion, he withdrew from their meetings, and was soon given up to the buffetings of Satan, that his soul might be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus.

About this time there arose a sect called Dorrelites, from one Dorrel their head. Their religion appeared to the world to be an open door to licentiousness.\* These my father joined, which was detrimental to his earthly property. Under the restrictions of these people, he was brought out from the dead works of the law, and freely justified by Grace.

I lived in the society of my friends, and under the control of my parents, till I was eighteen years of age ; during which time I wrought at plantation work, *summers*, and enjoyed the privilege of a school education, *winters*, for which I am indebted to my parents. I ever had more of a taste for learning than time for improvement, as the circumstances of my parents were too limit-

\* A short, though very imperfect account of them, may be seen in Hannah Adams' History of the people of Massachusetts.

ed to give me a liberal education. I shall pass over my infancy with little remark, as no interesting incident occurred, and begin where my mind began to be exercised upon the works of Deity.

In early youth I was led to the pleasing study of self-knowledge, and to survey the fields of Nature, where I have pleasingly spent many hours in contemplating upon the works of Deity, and in my weakness strove to comprehend the existence of a God, till I became almost lost in thought, wonder, and admiration! And because I could not visibly see a spiritual God, and comprehend his existence, I was induced to believe, that there was no God but Nature, and that all things came by chance: Or, that it was the Sun, the great illuminary of the earth, who, by his influential rays, made his daily journies through the trackless ether to visit us from on high. But on hearing some people tell of Apparitions and solemn warnings of Death, *which I had reason to believe*, I thought there might be a spiritual God, but while reasoning again in myself, I was left in despair.

I thought if I should ever see any of these, it would be sufficient to convince me that there was an Almighty Being, self-existent, and independent, the Author and Creator of all things; and when thus convinced, I

thought I would willingly serve and obey him. I lay in this slough of despond till the Autumn of 1806, when it pleased the Lord in the following miraculous manner to make known his existence.

My Comrades and I, on Sundays during the summer, had erected a dam across a meandering stream for the purpose of bathing. Here we spent much of our time, (which we ought to have devoted to the service of our Maker) in sinful sports, often torturing insects. I sometimes felt pangs of keen remorse but did not think myself so wicked as some of my mates who used profane language.—But I pass from this episode to tell of wonders.—

One Saturday in November, after I had borne the fatigues of the day in the field, I retired to our frequented place to prepare for the Sabbath, as I calculated to attend meeting: While walking alone to the place, gloomy thoughts arose in my mind, and I marvelled at my parents' objections to my going, as they had never made any before. The lowering sky was overcast, and the sun had almost hidden itself in the western hemisphere, when I began to invest myself with my apparel, & turning towards the west I beheld one of my companions, upon a horse, coming down a lane that led near the place where I was. I viewed him with attention

for several minutes without turning my eyes from him, and knew him to be my wicked comrade, as he was in his ordinary dress. I marvelled greatly at his coming, but thought he had seen me from a certain place, and hastened hither to inform me of some party that he wished me to attend. I looked attentively at him till he advanced several rods towards me, but he came very slow. I then slipped on my vest in a hurry and thought I would hasten to meet him ; but on looking a second time, behold ! he had vanished ! I hastened with cautious steps to the place where I last saw him ; but him and his horse I saw no more. Neither was there the tracks of a horse upon the ground, which gave me more alarm ! In a perturbation of mind, I hastened home, and acquainted my friends with what I had seen ; but they made light of it and said, "*It was my imagination*"—It was in vain, they could not persuade me out of it, I knew it to be a reality. With a mind burthened with gloomy reflections, I retired to my chamber, where I composed myself as much as possible, and sleep at length stole insensibly upon me.

At the dawn of day I was awakened by a noise in the door-yard, which at first appeared like a few broken strokes on a muffled drum. On hearing it a second time I went to the window—All was silent ! I had hard-

ly composed myself in bed when I heard it several times more, though not so loud as at first ; I went to the window again ; all was silent, and I heard it no more.

Three days had hardly passed before my comrade (whose ghostly image I had seen) was taken sick with a fever which proved fatal to him. He was in the agonies of deep distress ! and died apparently without repentance !! I attended his funeral, and went to the place of his interment, where the first dirt flung upon the coffin made the same noise I had heard in the chamber. But all this was not sufficient to melt the obdurate heart of a sinner ! Nothing but the mighty power of God under affliction could ever humble so vile a wretch !! I have wondered many times why God dealt thus with my companion, that these things should happen to me for reproof, while I was yet a sinner, and deserving death : But it has pleased the Lord in this miraculous way to make known his existence, and raise me from the slough of despond in which I had fallen, that his Name might be glorified.—But Oh ! the ingratitude of this hard and wicked heart ! Disobedient, alas ! to the commands of God ! I broke my promise ! joined again with the wicked ! and continued in the sinful practices of the world. I often felt the reproofs

of the Lord in my heart, but they were soon smothered in the vortex of pleasure.

Thus I lived till July 1807, when I was violently seized with a burning fever, which threatened to dry up the resources of life. The preying disorder fast wasted my flesh; my trembling limbs began to fail; and nature, yielding to the disorder, gave omen of my approaching dissolution.

On the 13th day of my distress, my Mother came into the room, and after looking attentively at me for several minutes, retired in silence. Her falling tears bespoke the feelings of her heart! I saw my life was despaired of!—The thought of death or dying had not before come into my mind—This awakened me from my stupidity—My thoughts were no longer dormant—I began in good earnest to converse with death and think of eternity—My sins were all set in array before me—They were as a mountain inaccessible—I thought I was a great sinner, and if I died as I then was, damned I must be forever! I was for some time in great distress of mind, fearing my sins were so great as to seal my damnation forever. Thus in pain and anguish I lay while the “*Gates of Hell did compass me about.*” After being for some time absorbed in melancholy reflections, it was revealed to me that I must die, that the Angel of

Death was waiting to do his office, and at two o'clock the next day, I must bid adieu to all things here below, for my soul would be required of me.

This became so rivited in my mind, that, if I had seen a man, with the bloody instrument of death in his hand, ready to strike the fatal blow, and plunge my soul into eternity, it would not have been more real.

Now, O reader ! imagine my feelings ! for they surpassed all bounds of description ! Suffice it to say, I think my pain of mind would equal the sting of death ; for the thoughts of dying were perfect peace in comparison with those of plunging into an endless eternity unprepared to meet God ! In the bitterness of my soul I cried, and this was my lamentation, “ Oh that I had religion ! I should be willing to die, and could go rejoicing ; (here religion was placed before me, and I saw it, and knew that it would take away all slavish fear of Death and Hell and give me comfort in a dying hour) but alas ! I have abused the mercies of God, and who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death ? For now my life is suspended upon a brittle thread, which a few more hours of time are hastening to cut, then my soul must take its flight into the unknown world.” Here I was in great despair, and durst not pray, knowing that God was just, and justice cried “ *Cut him down.*” And if

I attempted to plead for mercy, sin clouded all hope.—At length, as I lay apparently upon the brink of eternal woe, seeing nothing but death before me, suddenly there came a sweet flow of the love of God to my soul, which gradually increased. At the same time, there appeared a small gleam of light in the room, above the brightness of the sun, then at his meridian, which grew brighter and brighter : As this light and love increased, my sins began to separate, and the Mountain removed towards the east. At length, being in an ecstasy of joy, I turned to the other side of the bed, (whether in the body or out I cannot tell, God knoweth) there I saw two spirits, which I knew at the first sight. But if I had the tongue of an Angel I could not describe their glory, for they brought the joys of heaven with them. One was God, my Maker, almost in bodily shape like a man. His face was, as it were a flame of Fire, and his body, as it had been a Pillar and a Cloud. In looking steadfastly to discern features, I could see none, but a small glimpse would appear in some other place. Below him stood Jesus Christ my Redeemer, in perfect shape like a man—His face was not a blaze, but had the countenance of fire, being bright and shining. His Father's will appeared to be his ! All was condescension, peace, and love !! I was filled with the

sacred flame, and the glory of God ; I thought one spark more in my soul would have destroyed this mortal frame !! I was happy !!! happy !!! happy !!! I wanted ten thousand tongues to sing their sweet, their glorious praise !! It was a heaven here below for the space of half an hour !!\* But how infinitely short must I come of describing their glory, for want of language to paint my feelings ! For the joys of Heaven so far surpass all bounds of description, or human conception, that christians here below come infinitely short of forming a competent idea of the joys that await the righteous : “ *Eye hath not seen, Ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive of those good things, the Father hath prepared for them that love him.*”

They did not make use of words, *vocally*, to communicate ideas as we do, for spirit communicateth to spirit without words, and so methinks it will be in the day of eternity. In their countenance were all their words ; and their conversation was sweeter than an audible voice. The Father said,

“ You may go with us, to the invisible world, and be happy as many are ; but cannot come into our immediate presence, and be so happy as some till that mountain of sin is taken away ;

\*This was the time they were at the bed.

✱ for it must ever remain in your sight and keep you back ; ‘ for, says Christ, (with great pleasantness, and a smile upon his countenance) *you* came not unto me that it might be removed ; but *I* unto *you*, therefore, your happiness cannot be so great : For *you* should have come unto *me*, that your sins might be forgiven ; then would this Mountain have been taken away that you might go and be with us.’—‘ But *now*, says the Father, (after a pause) if you stay, and come unto Christ as you ought before : Humble yourself, and ask of him that your sins may be forgiven ; and learn of him for he is meek and lowly of mind, and will shew you all that you must do ; and are faithful in doing whatsoever is made known to you ; *then* will this mountain be taken away that you may be with us in our presence forever.”

Being now left to the freedom of my choice, I hardly knew what to do ; for, when I beheld their glory, my soul leaped to go ; but viewing the mountain of sin, which was ever to remain in my sight, I concluded in my mind, that I would stay in the world, and come unto Christ that it might be taken away. I then looked, and behold,

they were almost imperceptibly taking their flight! They went to the southeast, ascending up with their faces towards me; but they did not go, *comparatively*, faster than the sun, being almost twelve hours in ascension.

When they were several feet from me, I saw them in great glory, and almost concluded to go; but I recoiled again at the sight of my sins, and thought I would stay in the world: But on looking more attentively at them, and seeing a smile of complacency in their countenance towards me, I thought if I should *then* ask of them, they would forgive my sins, and remove the mountain, that I might go and be with them:—Twice it came upon my tongue to speak, but a sense of my unworthiness kept me back. Had I spoken the first time, no doubt, my sins would have been forgiven, and I have died, and gone with them, and *now been in heaven*, instead of sojourning in this unfriendly world. But when I was about to speak the second time, I sometimes feared that God would destroy me if I asked so great things, when he had been *so merciful* and pointed out a way for me. I *then* felt willing to come back to the world and suffer, and thought I would be faithful and do every thing that was required of me, that this mountain might be taken away.

When they were some way off, I saw as it were two hills or gentle rises of ground with a valley between them. I was upon one, about six rods from the house; and saw them upon the other, at a small distance with an inviting smile upon their countenance. These gentle rises gradually increased: The one they were on seemed to move with them, and grew in proportion as they went; first into hills, then into mountains, and when the mountain had become exceeding large, the valley was deep and impassable so that I could not get to them, but must return.—I then thought, if they would restore me again to health, and give me three months to prepare for death, *as a sick bed was no place*, I would do all they had required, and *more* by their assistance, then I should be willing to die and leave this world that I might go and be with them; but to this I received no answer, which caused me great anxiety at times.

After this, as I lay upon my bed, I saw them slowly ascending up; and as they went from me, the Light and Love gradually decreased in like manner as it had come, but more slow. They were in my sight till about the 12th hour of the night, being then apparently as high, or higher than the clouds, the Heavens received them out of my sight.

From this very hour my fever took a

favorable turn and I began to amend : But this was ascribed to medical aid, by my friends, who had not seen the glory of God. I did not relate what had passed at that time, because of their unbelief, not being able to describe what I had seen or felt.

I saw a gleam of the Light, and felt a flow of the Love to my soul for three days : And often since, while meditating upon the glorious appearance of my blessed Maker and Redeemer, I have been filled with joy and gladness within, and could seemingly almost see them before me.

During the time of their appearance, which was about twelve hours, I did not know of any person's coming into the room, though I had never been left so long before. But when I came to have a knowledge of sublunary things, I found I had been lost, in the transition, to what had past, insomuch that I marvelled at the sudden appearance of my friends around my bed.

I fast recovered my health, and for a while was happy in the love of God. I felt as though I wanted to be with Christians and hear them talk about religion. It happened so, a few days after, that I heard some Baptist Professors, but it did not give me *that* joy and satisfaction I expected ; for they could not talk *that same happy language* I felt ; and I found they had never experi-

enced *that love* in their souls. Before this, I thought all who made a profession of religion, and belonged to a church, were always happy, and prepared to die. But after this, I felt as though I should be alone, and have no one to go with me. I thought if any of my Youthful Companions should set out in religion, I would then make an open profession and could give them my heart and my hand to go to heaven with them. But these, alas! were seeking the pleasures of the world.

One would not think that a person, whose mind had been so illuminated with heavenly light, and felt such extatic joys, would ever go back into sin. But alas! I did not live long in this Paradisical state before I grieved the Holy Spirit, and as he withdrew, my faith became weak, and the cross exceeding great, so that I was unwilling to have my mates know the exercise of my mind and have it said I was going to become religious; and to avoid their censure, I joined with them in their juvenility, and vain amusements, which they called "*innocent recreations.*" But it brought such conviction to my mind that it destroyed my happiness.

Not long after this, being insensible of my debility, I used too much exercise which brought on a relapse, and my pain became

very sensible, both of body and mind. I thought I had so abused the mercies of the Lord, and broken my promise, that he would not suffer me to live! Horror and despair seized my guilty soul, and if ever any in this life felt the pains of the damned, I believe I did! I was now resolved to come unto Christ and seek the salvation of my soul, come life or death! I got a piece of an old bible and began to read, thinking to find relief by searching the scripture. But my friends observing me in this distress, said, "Norris, do you think you shall never get well?" Here I perceived their thoughts, and was ashamed to have them know that I was going to become religious: In confusion of mind, I flung down the bible and went out of the room, filled with horror and despair, wretched companions indeed to soothe my troubles in this distress! I felt as though I could retire to some remote part of the earth, and in a lonely shade, spend my days in salutary mourning before the Lord.

After about three, days the Lord was pleased to rebuke the disorder, and I began to amend.—But shocking to relate! a recovery of my health, brought on a second relapse of my sins! I strove to wear off the convictions from my mind, by living in the pleasures of the world; but I did not sin so

cheap as before, feeling greater condemnation from day to day. I then joined again with the wicked and went on from one scene of merriment to another, adding sin to sin, till I felt a torment in my own breast. Such was the horror of my mind, that often when I returned home from parties, I was afraid to close my eyes in sleep, lest I should awake in hell before morning!—Thus, amid the tried scenes of pleasure, I felt as it were, the pains of the damned in my soul; & conscience continually accusing me before the Lord, so that I had no peace to my soul, nor happiness in the things that were wont to delight me; sorrow became my companion, and grief was not a stranger to my heart. I felt resolved to leave my wicked mates and betake myself to travelling to see if my peaceful hours would not return. Accordingly, in the month called December, I left my Father's house, and sojourned awhile among strangers. During this time, I saw the tender mercies of the Lord, and his Parental Care over me, (tho' disobedient I had been,) for when I was sick in the streets, without friends or money, and no one to compassionate me in my distress, I had great confidence in the Lord, who sent a man to my relief, when nought but my tears had told my grief to the world.

When I first saw the man, he was some way off, standing in the door of a mill. The Spirit said "*that man* has been sent of the Lord for your relief;" soon he came, and took me to his hospitable home, where I stayed till I regained my strength, thence I returned to my father's. But I was yet unwilling to consecrate myself to the Lord and do his will, so my joys were still contaminated by the sinful pleasures of the world; and for the sake of peace, I again left a father's house,\* and wandered to and fro among strangers. I took a journey into the State of New-York; from thence I went to Vermont, where I sojourned three years, and taught school winters; but I found myself very incompetent to the task, on account of my learning. Here I had great consolation among the people called Methodists, and often felt it my duty to devote my time to the service of the Lord, and exhort in meeting; but I was unwilling to expose myself to public censure, so I went with my mind burthened. But I had great consolation in secret prayer, though the first time I ever attempted it, I looked around several times to see if the devil was not just behind me.

\* On the 13th of the month called March, A. D. 1802.

The summer of 1810, I spent in the north part of the State of New-York. In returning from thence in the fall, my life was prolonged by a great deliverance.

In April, 1811, I was admitted a member of a public Seminary in the town of Middlebury where I made some improvement in learning. Here I often retired from the busy and active scenes of the world into some lonely place and poured out my wants before the Lord, and often felt that my prayer was heard before I arose. I was as one alone in the world ; company neither for the godly, nor yet for the vicious ; and all the happiness I enjoyed, was in ranging the lonely fields in blissful meditation before the Lord.—One night, while in this lonely state, the suspirations of a female reached my heart, which introduced our acquaintance. I then thought I would try to settle down in life and make husbandry my employment. For this purpose I took a journey into the Western Country in pursuit of some place that would welcome my abode. But the convictions of the Lord so followed me, that I could not confine myself to act in this sphere, and was obliged to abandon the pursuit.

I next thought I would engage in the mercantile business, and see if these convictions would not wear off. For this purpose

I returned to a village in the town of Homer, but I found no immediate employment, and in my indigent circumstances I knew not what to do. Several days in silence passed away, but nothing new appeared. At length I felt an impression, that, if I would hire my board, & wait patiently a few days, some way would be provided for me. This impression bore with such weight upon my mind, that I at length obeyed its dictates; and one night, while in my peaceful slumbers, I was warned in a dream to prepare for a journey, I thought either to Philadelphia or New York. Accordingly, I arose in the morning and put my things in order, not knowing how I should go or who was going; but while I yet waited, I was informed that a man was going to set out that day, with some cattle for one of the above mentioned places. Fully convinced that he needed my assistance, I sat out, and my belief was soon reduced to a certainty by solicitation, and we continued our journey the same day.

After disposing of the cattle at Chester, we went to Newburg, and were to sail from thence to New York. While we waited here for a passage, the captain of a vessel, a stranger, often came, and after conversing with me, sometimes embraced me in his arms, requesting that I would take passage with

him, to which after many solicitations I consented. But this singular conduct from a stranger I could not account for ; I feared it was only a fallacy to answer some diabolical end, then unknown.

We left Newburg July 2d at sunset. At ten in the evening we were driven ashore at West Point, where we lay all night. At 6 the next morning, we had a good breeze and got under way : The vessel was crowded with passengers, who, in costly splendor, were going to celebrate the birthday of our Nation. My dress at this time was ordinary and bespoke my poverty ; I was beneath the notice of all and had no one to converse with me (except the captain, who, in his usual way, gave token of his friendship.) But I retained my implicit confidence in the Lord, and thought, "*tho' all men should cast me off, yet he would not forsake me,*" for his Grace and Providence had seemed to attend me on the road, and his Parental Care was still over me, so that I did not want for a consoling friend, or bed of repose. I saw the dealings of the Lord every thing, and was constrained to take knowledge that it was of God.

As we drew near the City, all hands were called on deck to make compensation for their passage ; but the captain deferred me from pay, saying, that I was a stranger in

the place, and had better board with him in the vessel, as he would not ask me so much as the rest. I stayed that night, and was lodged courteously, with him, while rich merchants were turned aside. The next morning, the captain wished to visit his family in New-Jersey, and after screwing out a promise that I would stay, he left us, expecting to see me at his return the next morning; but his singular conduct made me still suspicious of him, and I wished to keep out of his company; so, I left New-York that evening, and sailed for New-Windsor; from thence I went to Chester, where we had left our horses.

At the return of the vessel at Newburg, I went on board, and soon found myself in the arms of the captain, who, in much tenderness, gently rebuked me for coming away, saying, that I had done very wrong. He used all possible means to have us tarry with him that night; but finding all his entreaties vain, he followed after us and requested that I would go *once more* to the vessel, which, through inconvenience, I refused: Had I gone, or tarried at New-York till his return, I know not but something of the greatest importance might have taken place; for at our parting his tears bespoke his feelings and were witness of the sincerity of his friendship. We reached Homer on the 18th

of the month called July, where I found myself disappointed of my expected employment, and often felt it my duty to sanctify myself to the service of the Lord. But I was yet unwilling to give up all and follow Christ.

I next sighed for military honors ;—and thought if the Lord disappointed in them, I would *then* give up to do his will. I sought for admittance into the Military Academy at West-Point, but I found the hand of the Lord was against me in this ; for disappointments awaited me on every side. I now saw nothing for me but to go forward in the Name of the Lord. If I tried to excuse myself from the work, it brought heaviness upon me. I thought many times, if I ~~knew~~ there was nothing after death, and my soul could *then* be extinct, I should rather die than live in this world. But when I gave up all its sinful pleasures, and consented to do the will of my God, I had peace to my soul.

I first went among the Methodists, in the town of Homer, and declared the Name of Jesus, and had great consolation in the Lord. This was New-Year's-day evening ;\* and a happy New-Year it was to my soul ! I continued with them in their meetings, until the 10th of the month called May ; then I

\*A. D. 1813.

took a journey northward, and spent the summer with my Brother upon the wilds of Ontario. We lived in a solitary retirement from the rest of the world. I had great consolation in secret prayer, and dedicated myself to the Lord; giving over all earthly pursuits. But I was yet without strength and knew not how to set myself about the work; *for the fullness of the time had not yet come*, and being tempted, it was sometimes suggested to my mind, that the Lord had not called me.

Thus I spent the summer, and in the fall, a few nights previous to my departure for Massachusetts, these thoughts with fervency ran through my mind, while in my peaceful slumbers. "Behold, as it drew towards the close of a lowery day, my brother and I were walking across a field to a meeting at a private house. On entering a room, we found ourselves among the congregation, in the midst of whom, stood Lorenzo Dow, with a Bible in his hand, preaching the Gospel unto them. A young man and woman, sitting on a bureau, made much disturbance. The preacher spake to them for their folly without effect. I reminded them that we were in the immediate presence of Almighty God and his Holy Angels, and that we ought to be as solemn as Eternity. A deep gloom for awhile pervaded! At length, some arose

in argumental contention with the preacher ! Soon a short intermission ensued which bro't it to the dusk of the evening. The congregation returned to different apartments, and left Lorenzo sitting alone by a table, and myself in a remote part of the room.

While I was musing here, the Damsel to whom I had spoken in the meeting, came, and after striving to steal my affections by her winning gestures, tried to slip a silver ring on my finger, but through mistake left it in my hand, then went away, and turning about said, "O heavens ! if I ha'n't left it on his finger, I shall die." After a short pause she retired.—I knew not what this meant, but supposed in her folly she was trying some trick. Soon there came a young widow of my acquaintance, having a piece of silver with three ovals, *the largest in the middle*, curiously decorated with flowers and running vines. This she put into my hand, and shut it up ; telling me to be sure and keep it, then retired into a room with the other.

Presently there came a woman from the chamber, a stranger, to appearance about thirty years old ; of tall stature, and a countenance which bespoke *that sensibility of heart* I had not seen in the others. She brought a Gold Watch, which I might have, if I would not suffer my heart to be ensnared by the

folly of the two first. For these she said were trying tricks, and if they could only ensnare my heart by their folly, they would then have full power over me, and would even lead me into trouble. I came, said she, not to entice you by the Watch ; but to tell you of the danger, that you might escape trouble, and live in peace, if you would forsake them and hearken unto me. This I thought I would do ; not for the sake of the Watch, but because of the serenity of her countenance, feeling that there was safety in her presence. Her looks indicated Wisdom, and this I think was her name, every feature depicted it ; all her ways are pleasantness, and her paths are peace.\*

After she had retired, and the others with ~~them~~ taken back their seducing pledges, I

\*These I have construed in the following manner, —Feeling the warmth of passion so sensibly for the first, I conceive it to be the pleasing follies of youth and pleasures of the world, which are alluring to sin, and will lead us into pain and misery.

The widow, with the three Ovals of Silver, I conceive to be the world, with the riches and honor thereof. After the flower of youth begins to fade, they powerfully attract and steal the affections of the heart, and will lead us into pain and irretrievable ruin.

The woman with the Watch I conceive to be wisdom in guarding against these, lest in my weakness I should give way to temptation. and suffer my heart to be ensnared by the folly of youth, or love of the world, and thereby heap endless trouble upon myself.

seated myself at the table with Lorenzo, who was reading the bible, and told him I had long had an anxiety to see him, as I had been reading some of his books, and had one then in my possession, called his "*Opinion*." He said it was a good book and its writings dictated by the Holy Spirit. A number he said had made application to travel with him in connection, but if I was a mind, he would take me in; and if I would go to Philadelphia I might receive my Appointment and be under pay. I told him I had calculated to go to Massachusetts and take a school for three months. Well, said he, when you are on your journey, it will be but a little further to go round by Philadelphia, and then if you receive your Appointment you will be under pay and can keep school too: or will have a time that you can study if you are a mind, or go where you please; but at the end of six months, or a little before, you must return, for then you will receive your Commission, and must go where you are sent." After an acquiescence to what he had said, I awoke, but this singular dream hath made a lasting impression on my mind.

November 4th I took my journey for Massachusetts and thought I would live in some society where I could enjoy the privilege of evening meetings. But as I had been long absent, my parents wished me to spend the

winter with them, and instruct the youth of that place, who were very licentious. I often retired to the woods for secret prayer (under pretence of hunting) and consulted the will of my God ; and when I found that duty called upon me to stay, I made this complaint to the Lord, that, I should have no christian friend to converse with, or house for prayer, but my trust was still in God.—I found a few people called Methodists, in a remote part of the town, where I attended meetings, but never felt it my duty to come under their discipline, being always strictly forbidden by the teachings of the Holy Spirit, for all that God hath cleansed, are clean indeed ; and those that receive the Spirit of Adoption, are all Children of the Most High. Notwithstanding I had been called upon by the Spirit, and dedicated myself to do the will of my God, yet I was sometimes tempted, and doubted of my Calling ; and for full confirmation, I asked the Lord for a sign, that if he had called me, he would convert some in the neighborhood. I prayed at first for three, but afterwards thought if the Lord would convert *one* in this barren place, and increase my impressions, I would take it in answer to prayer. Several weeks in silence passed away, but nothing new appeared. I attended constantly to secret prayer, and could but admire to see that every needful thing I asked, though in little of faith,

was granted. The Spirit of the Lord moved with power upon the hearts of some, and *three* were stirred up to seek the salvation of their souls. A door was opened for preaching, and a house for prayer, and good I trust was done in the Name of the Lord.

April 7th, A. D. 1814, was a day appointed for public fasting, humiliation, and prayer, throughout the State. My mind for several days previous had been much exercised to know whether it would be a duty to abstain from food while my soul was happy in God. I tried to feel it as such, but it did not appear to be a duty. The night preceding I had an anxious desire that it might be made known in a dream, but in the morning I awoke in the same distress.—Presently, as I lay upon the bed, I was carried away in a vision, and saw St. Paul, who showed me in a parable that the fast was not for me, not those who were happy in the love of God; but those that were in trouble and distress, *even Nature* called upon such to fast. The Apostle unfolded some deep mysteries, but the Lord has been pleased to seal them, lest they should be made public.

April 20th I visited my Brother in Ellensburg, near Sackett's Harbor, expecting to spend the summer in that place. But being moved upon by the spirit I set out upon a journey of pilgrimage without any Credentials, following the impulse of the Spirit. I

did not enter on my mission until the fourth day (it being Sunday) then I spoke in a meeting, and was received with a cordial welcome. But I found I could not hold meetings, as I belonged to no church or society, for people would think I was an impostor.

The next day, May the 9th, I went to Utica to get a bible, but finding some pocket Testaments, the first I had ever seen, I took one of these and went on. After I had travelled several miles, I drew towards a house, where I saw a collection of people, and went in. Here was a Woman, laboring in the Gospel; she was trying to pull down the separating walls which hinder professors from running together in Love and sweet heavenly union: After meeting I gave exhortation and went on. The next day I fell in company with a minister that was there; he held a meeting in the evening, after sermon I gave an exhortation, and one of the brethren took me to his house.——Three days after, as I journeyed along in deep meditation, I came into another road and knew not where to go, as I could not hold meetings. But I still felt that Necessity was laid unto me, and woe was me if I went not. Then I cried unto my God, that if he had sent me, he would tell me where to go, for I had been travelling these many days and could not hold meetings.

Then the Spirit of the Lord said unto me, "Go to Truxton, to your friend's house, and warn him and the inhabitants of that Hill and of the Hills round about where they have not the gospel preached unto them," intimating that it should be made known when I was there. I said, Lord, who will believe? Who will *know* that thou hast sent me? People will call me an impostor, for I have been travelling these many days, and could not hold meetings, and thou wouldst not have me join any church or Society and go according to their discipline.——

"Write, says the Lord, the things\* that have been done for you, *as a Testimony*, that the world may know that I have sent you: And if any believe, it is well; and if any believe not, then have you done *your duty*;" intimating that they must answer before him. As I started on my journey, the Spirit said, "Now have you been to Philadelphia: It has been but a little way as you dreamed.† Now have you got your *Commission* as Dow told you, (citing me to the Testament in my hand.) And *now* you must go where you are sent."

\*The things alluded to were three supernatural things, viz. the apparition, their glorious appearance, and what was then taking place. With a mention of others that were necessary to elucidate them and shew the dealings of God to my soul.

†This was to Utica, four miles out of my way.

I went along a little further, meditating upon what had passed, and thought I would open my Commission to see what the first command for me would be. It was in the last Chapter of St. Mark's Gospel, where Christ appeared unto his disciples, after his resurrection, and upbraided them with their unbelief. I was melted into tenderness, and *even wept* at the hardness of their hearts, and thought, if I had been there, O! how I would have believed! When I came to these words where he said, "*Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature,*" it struck me to the very heart, as a Command fresh from heaven to me. I read it over the second time, and the other verses as I now write them, though I since find they are not so in the book.—The command was—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature."

16. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

17. *And these signs shall follow them that believe : In my name shall they cast out devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ;*

18. *They shall take up serpents ; and if they drink any deadly poison, it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover.*

19. *And behold, if you have a message from God to any, and they die, and you deliver not your message, their blood will I require at your hand ;*

20. *But behold if you deliver your message, and they receive it not, but die in their sins, their own blood will be found upon their garments.*

21. *So having said this, he ascended up into Heaven, and sat upon the right hand of God."*

The 19th and 20th verses which are here written, I did then actually see, and read, in the book, which is the New Testament. But I cannot since find them there, but the Spirit did place them in letter and print before me. While these with power were running thro' my mind, I saw a man (whether real or mental I cannot say) with a dark spotted and dirty coat on, with spots of blood on the folds. After this, fear came upon me, & I hastened on my journey that I might do the will of my God, and warn the people ere they die.

## APPENDIX.

Having now finished the testimony which the Lord God commanded me to write, I invite all to read it with candor and attention, and hope they will not despise him that God hath called: a feeble instrument in his hand to bring about his noble purpose. I have written as one in the immediate presence of the Lord, under the guide and influence of the Holy Spirit. I had calculated to have written all that had passed till the time of my second Birth, or Birth into the kingdom, (on the morning of the 6th of the month called February, A. D. 1815,) which would shew the entire regeneration of man; but at present I am only permitted to send this, AS A TESTIMONY, into the world, which is but an introduction to a greater work that will soon be manifest; for the Angel that has the EVERLASTING GOSPEL to preach is coming in the flesh to do his work. For this purpose one is forced from concealment to utter his voice for the necessary preparation of the coming of Christ, and the ushering in of that glorious day. By permission of the Lord God, whose Servant and Prophet I am, I inform the people that part of the 14th Chapter of Revelation is now fulfilling: and that the Lord has already began to deliver HIS PEOPLE; and to punish disobedience to the blessed Gospel of Truth, by spreading desolation over the earth, reducing Cities, and casting down Thrones to a level with the ground. Woe unto the inhabitants by reason of the judgments to come. Fear God and give glory unto him that your souls may abide the day of his wrath.

What remains will be written in a second book with the revelations of the Lord. A copy of this is free for any who wish to republish and spread it throughout the earth.

**NORRIS STEARNS.**

A servant of the living God.